



Physical Activity...Exercise... Movement... Why Bother ? The benefits are too great to ignore!

Active Learning

Active learning is purposefully embedding content into movement activities in order to increase motivation as well as improve memory and recall. This is an important part of implementing brain compatible learning strategies.

- There is a constant interplay between movement and learning. The part of the brain processing movement is the same part of the brain that processes learning.
- Physical activity shapes muscles, heart, lungs, bones, basal ganglia, cerebellum and corpus collosum. Exercise fuels and feeds the brain, which enhances growth and greater connections between neurons.
- Physical Activity can trigger the release of the body's "good feeling" drug endorphin or the "challenge" hormone, adrenaline. Studies show these serve as memory fixatives.
- Explicit Learning is what we read, write and talk about. This includes textbook learning, videos, lecture, pictures, and dialog. Implicit Learning includes all "hands-on" approaches such as trial and error, habits, role-plays, life experience, drama, experiential learning, games, physical activity and active learning. When you can tie explicit learning with implicit learning neural pathways that create the memory are strengthened.

The following activities can be used with many subjects to teach, practice and review content.

Handshake Partners - Students move to music around the area. When the music stops they pair up and are given a handshake to perform by the leader. Continue this procedure until all players have a handshake, high five, low five, pass on by, and creative shake partner. They will identify partners by the handshake called. Call them faster and faster for more of a challenge. Then you can use this movement activity to review content, give challenges, think-pair-share, active brainstorm, etc.

Ideas for using this activity:

Moving Concepts -Create movements to go with the key concepts you are teaching. Students move to music and give attention when music stops. Give them a movement each time you stop the music. Then tie a key word or concept to each movement. Use Partner Scramble or On the Ball activity to review and boost memory. (Nutrients - Carbohydrates, Protein, Fat, Vitamins and Minerals)

Ideas for using this activity:

On the Ball - This can be used to review material. Students stand in two circles. One student tosses a ball to another and asks a question or gives a clue. The student can take his/her time and answer the question. If he/she does not know the answer he/she switches to the other group. Variation - Let them ask for a lifeline. With a lifeline the student that does not know the answer can ask for a lifeline. Any



student in the group that knows the answer raises his/her hand and can help. If he/she gets it right both stay. If he/she gets in wrong they both go.

Ideas for using this activity:

Tag and Go - Concepts/words are written on old balls, laminated cards, or other objects that can be written on. Students with the balls move through the area and try to tag another student. The tagged student takes the ball but before that student can tag someone else he/she must go the teacher and answer a question about the concept or word on the ball. Example – Geography (States & Capitols)

Ideas for using this activity:

What's On Your Plate – Have students use paper plates and colored markers, crayons or pencils to represent what they have been learning on two paper plates. The plates can be used with music to lead them in a movement activity. When you stop the music call on individuals to share what they have on their plates or answer a question. You could also combine musical scramble activity with “What’s on your plate?” and have students move around the room to share and add more to each other’s plates. Have students pull out their plates at later times for review.

Ideas for using this activity:

Brainstorm/Answer Scramble - Have students moving around the room to music. If you have space use different locomotor movements. When the music stops they must partner with someone near them. Ask them a question, give them a task or have them brainstorm. When partners have come to consensus, they sit down so that you know they have an answer. Call on groups for answers then get them moving again. If you're using this as an active brainstorm have partners add as many items as they can to their list. When the music starts again they begin moving. When it stops they find a new partner and add to their brainstorm list by sharing with each other what they already have written down.

Ideas for using this activity:

Tic-Tac-Toe - Play this in groups of 3. One student is the “Sage” who has a list of questions and answers. Students create 9 square posters with categories, concepts or facts then play a game of tic-tac-toe by tossing pennies or beanbags to the squares from a designated throwing line. The catch to this is that if a player is to keep the square he/she must answer a question or give a correct fact for that category.

Ideas for using this activity:



Add On - Have students write their name and all that they can remember about a topic or subject area on a piece of paper. They crumple the paper loosely and with the paper ball in hand begin moving around the room or standing in place, tossing and catching their own ball. When the music stops they toss their ball into the air and pick one up that is not their own. They take the new paper and try to add what they know to the other person's paper. Play 4 rounds. You could do this with more rounds by folding the paper to make more sections.

Ideas for using this activity:

Holes - After students start taking notes, brainstorming, doing a review sheet, etc. have all students stand up and move around the room in open spaces to the music. When the music stops all students go to another person's paper and add as much as they can until the music starts again.

Ideas for using this activity:

March On - Put on some John Philips Sousa and march around the room. When the music stops have students partner and tell each other the 2-3 most important key words, concepts, facts, etc. from the lesson, class or a given time period.

Ideas for using this activity:

One, Two, Three – Add/Subtract/Multiply - Students face a partner with hands behind their backs. On three they both throw out a number (teacher specifies whether to use one hand or both and whether or not to add, subtract or multiply). First partner to get the correct answer wins the round. Keep playing with that partner until the music starts. When the music starts students move into open spaces, when it stops find a new partner, listen for any new directions and play again.

How else could you use this idea?

Action English – Make a set of locomotor and non-locomotor movement cards (verbs) and a set of adverb cards. Have one student draw one from each deck, read them to the class. Start the music and have the students perform the action. Ask them to identify the verb and the adverb discussing the definition of each part of speech.

How else could you use this idea?

Use this space for more active learning ideas or for some that you may already use.



Energizers and Health Related Physical Fitness Activities

We can engage children in physical activities during the school day for the purpose of improving cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance as well as flexibility. At the same time we can teach them why it is important to maintain healthful fitness levels. These activities will also serve as energizers to increase alertness, blood flow and energy levels.

- Researchers report that kids are spending more and more time in sedentary activities and less and less time in physical activities and this is putting them at risk for obesity, heart disease, type II diabetes, and other illnesses associated with inactive lifestyles.
- Regular physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle. This message needs to come at children from all directions, not only in the gymnasium. It needs to be modeled by the trusted adults in their lives.
- Physical activity and exercise reduce stress levels. Chronic stress can negatively affect physical health and brain function. It releases chemicals that kill neurons in the critical area of the brain for long-term memory formation.
- Sitting too much = poor breathing and circulation, strained spinal column and lower back nerves, postural stress, musculoskeletal problems and overall body fatigue.
- Physical activity increases alertness, blood flow, oxygen flow, and energy.
- Physical activity involves emotion. Emotions drive attention. When fun physical activities are planned during the school day kids experience positive emotions, which put them in a positive state for learning. Engaging positive emotions and learning improves memory and the likelihood of recalling the information at a later time.

The following physical activities can be used to improve physical fitness levels. Fitness activities can be built into morning routines or used as energizers during the day.

Push-Up March– This is a great energizer that will also help build upper body strength. Put on some great marching music and have students get into the push-up position. The march is performed by picking up the right hand and touching it to the left shoulder then alternating by touching the left hand to the right shoulder.

How else could you use this idea?

Penny Stacking– This is another great energizer that will also help build upper body strength. Have students get in the push-up position, give them a stack of pennies and have them see if they can stack them one penny at a time while alternating left and right hands.

How else could you use this idea?



Low Fives– Partners face each other in the push-up position. When the music starts they see how many times they can alternately give each other “5” by touching right then left hands in space between them.

How else could you use this idea? (Hint... Counting, math concepts...)

Be Flexible – Teach your class a flexibility routine that each child knows. When you need a brain break or a quick energizer just say....”Who would like to lead us in our flexibility routine?” Another idea is to have students develop their own routine in small groups that they use throughout designated time period.

How else could you use this idea?

The following physical activities can be used in the classroom to give kids a brain break, as celebrations or to put kids in a positive state for learning. These activities will also serve as energizers to increase alertness, blood flow and energy levels.

Scarf Juggling – Using juggling scarves are a great instant activity energizer. You can set up a task sheet for students to have in their desks when you need to do a quick movement energizer. Students can pull out their scarves and their ongoing task sheet and work independently. They get an energizer and they get to see themselves improve at juggling skills.

How else could you use this idea?

One Behind – The leader chooses movements or stretches to perform. The class will follow what the leader does but always remains one movement behind. It works best if the leader starts with a static stretch and then moves to faster movement. This is a great one for being able to pay attention and remember what came before.

How else could you use this idea?

Leaders Change - Put on a great piece of energizing music and have the kids follow leaders in some chair movement or stand behind their chairs and do stationary movements. This can be done as a whole class or in smaller groups. Stop the music at regular intervals and switch to the next leader.

How else could you use this idea?

Use this space to list more energizers or for some that you may already use.



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References/Resources

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